

From his jail cell he continues to protest the repression of pro-democracy advocates in Egypt.

Mohamed has been on a hunger strike. He has lost almost half of his body weight and can no longer stand.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to give voice to the struggle for human rights and real democracy in Egypt.

The United States should stand on the side of those like Mohamed who are striving for human rights and democracy in the Middle East.

HONORING DELTA AIRLINES ON ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SERVICE TO THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

HON. GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN

OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 29, 2014

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, twenty-five years ago on June 1, 1989, Delta Air Lines launched its first flight in a twice weekly service from Tokyo's Narita airport to Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands. Operated then as Northwest Airlines and using a Boeing 747-200, this inaugural flight was a milestone in air service to my district; and I want to celebrate that event today.

Then and now, tourism is the lifeblood of our islands' economy; and this air connection with Japan, begun twenty-five years ago, has been essential to the growth and stability of our visitor industry. Other airlines have come and gone from the market, but Delta's commitment has been unwavering.

Today, the company is the only airline providing direct, scheduled, daily flights to and from Japan, carrying some 2,000 passengers per week on Boeing 757s. And these numbers add up: in the past ten years 23,000 Delta flights have provided seats for 4.25 million of our Japanese tourists.

Those flights to the Northern Marianas are, of course, only a tiny part of Delta's worldwide business. The company serves nearly 165 million passengers annually, flies to over 300 destinations worldwide, and employs almost 80,000 individuals. But those daily Japan/Marianas flights are crucial to our local economy, supporting numerous businesses and creating jobs.

And not only does Delta transport tourists. For many of the residents of the Northern Mariana Islands, whether traveling for business or pleasure, Delta is the airline of choice. The company provides a comfortable lounge at the Narita Airport hub and convenient connections: Delta is the only U.S. flag air carrier offering our community one-stop service to the mainland United States.

Delta stands out, too, for its good corporate citizenship, supporting many worthy groups and causes, including the Rotary Club of Saipan, the American Red Cross, the Marianas March Against Cancer, the Hotel Association of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce, NMI Crime Stoppers, the Northern Mariana Islands Council for the Humanities, and numerous sporting events. Of special note, Delta has been the sole airline sponsor for the Saipan Marathon since 2008.

Please, join me in honoring the management and employees of Delta Air Lines as we commemorate their twenty-five years of air service between the Northern Mariana Islands and Japan, and in wishing them many more years of continued success and growth.

RECOGNIZING THE 96TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPUBLIC DAY OF AZERBAIJAN

HON. STEVE COHEN

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 29, 2014

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my best wishes to the people of Azerbaijan as they celebrate Republic Day. This year marks the 96th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, when the people of Azerbaijan first gained their independence from the Russian Empire on May 28, 1918. Although Azerbaijan's independence was ended by Soviet forces in 1920, it is noteworthy that the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan was the world's first secular parliamentary democratic republic in a predominantly Muslim nation—earning diplomatic recognition from the United States during the administration of President Woodrow Wilson. We also recall with admiration that the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan granted universal suffrage to its citizens in 1918, making it the first Muslim country to give women the right to vote.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan restored its independence in 1991. Parliament adopted the Constitution Act on the Restoration of the State of Independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on October 18, 1991.

For the people of Azerbaijan, these last two decades of independence have not been without challenges. At the top of the list would be the ongoing conflict with Armenia. Although a cease fire was signed in 1994, more than 20% of Azerbaijan's territory—including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts—remains under Armenian occupation, leaving Azerbaijan to cope with hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. In 1993, the U.N. Security Council adopted four resolutions demanding complete, unconditional and immediate withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. I am happy that Azerbaijan is committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Armenia, and I support a swift and peaceful resolution to this conflict as well.

Azerbaijan is a key global security partner for the United States. Azerbaijan and the United States cooperate in countering terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and narcotics trafficking. Azerbaijani troops serve shoulder to shoulder with U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, as they previously did in Kosovo and Iraq. In support of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan has extended important over-flight clearances for U.S. and NATO flights as well as regularly providing landing and refueling operations at its airports for U.S. and NATO forces. Azerbaijan also plays an important role in the Northern Distribution Network, a supply route to Afghanistan, by making available its ground and Caspian naval transportation facilities.

Azerbaijan has emerged as a key player for enhancing global energy security, at a particularly critical time in light of ongoing events in Ukraine. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline are the main arteries delivering Caspian Sea energy resources to global markets, and completion of the Southern Gas Corridor—which will run from the Caspian Sea through Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Greece, and Albania into Italy—will increase the energy security of key American allies by increasing the amount of natural gas from the Caspian Sea to European markets.

Notably, Azerbaijan also provides roughly 40% of Israel's oil consumption. What may be more surprising to some is that Azerbaijan—a predominantly Muslim country—enjoys friendly ties with Israel beyond oil sales. Jews have resided in Azerbaijan for 2,500 years without persecution and today, the Jewish community in Azerbaijan numbers as high as 35,000. Azerbaijan is also home to Christian communities and has been praised for its religious tolerance by the European Parliament.

As a co-chair of the Congressional Azerbaijan Caucus, I congratulate the people of Azerbaijan on the occasion of Republic Day. I hope the United States and Azerbaijan will continue to work together to advance a partnership that benefits both of our nations.

HONORING THE LIFE OF STATE TROOPER SEAN O'CONNELL

HON. SUZAN K. DELBENE

OF WASHINGTON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 29, 2014

Ms. DELBENE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Trooper Sean O'Connell, who was tragically killed one year ago on May 31, 2013.

Trooper O'Connell, a 16-year veteran of the Washington State Patrol, lost his life in an on-duty motorcycle collision while working traffic control in the aftermath of the Skagit River Bridge collapse.

Trooper O'Connell was a highly respected police officer who valued the importance of law enforcement. He strongly believed in bringing the community together to help promote safety among families. He was an endearing man; dedicated to his work and to strengthening communities in Washington state.

Trooper O'Connell was a strong leader, highly respected, and loved by his fellow officers. He exemplified what it means to be a Washington State trooper, and his community continues to honor his commitment, courage, and dependability as an officer.

In remembering his life one year after his passing, I ask that thoughts and prayers go out to his wife, children, family and others who continue to miss him every day. He will be remembered as a hero for helping many after the devastating collapse of a bridge which now holds his name, Trooper Sean. M. O'Connell, Jr.